

Message Text

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SUBJ: IMPACT OF GRAIN PURCHASES ON SOVIET BUYING PLANS

1. DURING DISCUSSION WITH COMMATT AUGUST 14, VISITING U.S. BUSINESSMAN PROVIDED SMALL, BUT PERHAPS INDICATIVE, EXAMPLE OF IMPACT OF SOVIET GRAIN PURCHASES ON PLANS FOR IMPORT OF WESTERN INDUSTRIAL EQUIPMENT. ACCORDING TO BUSINESSMAN, HE WAS TOLD BY V.V. VOLODIN, CHIEF OF MAIN ADMINISTRATION FOR TOY PRODUCTION, MINISTRY OF LIGHT INDUSTRY, THAT MINISTRY HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED BY GOSPLAN TO HOLD OFF ON PROJECT INVOLVING CONSTRUCTION OF RELATIVELY LARGE PLANT FOR PRODUCTION OF MICROELECTRIC MOTORS FOR TOYS. VOLODIN SAID HE WAS TOLD THAT THERE WAS GENERAL HOLD ON "NON-ESSENTIAL" HARD-CURRENCY EXPENDITURES UNTIL END OF 1975. VOLODIN EXPLICITLY LINKED THIS ACTION TO GRAIN PURCHASES.

2. DURING MEETING AUGUST 13 WITH CODEL ALBERT, LOCAL CATERPILLAR REP NOTED THAT HE HAD BEEN INFORMED BY HIS BUYERS (I.E. TRAKTOROEKSPORT) THAT THERE WAS TEMPORARY HOLD ON MOST PURCHASES. ACCORDING TO CATERPILLAR REP, TRAKTOROEKSPORT OFFICIALS SEEMED RELAXED ABOUT THIS DEVELOPMENT AND PREDICTED THAT BY OCTOBER IT WOULD BE BUSINESS AS USUAL.

3. COMMENT: BY ALMOST ANY STANDARD, PLANT FOR PRODUCTION OF ELECTRIC MOTORS FOR TOYS WOULD HAVE TO BE CONSIDERED A "NON-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ESSENTIAL" ITEM, AND POSTPONEMENT OF THIS PROJECT UNDER CURRENT

CONDITIONS IS HARDLY SURPRISING. WORTH NOTING HOWEVER, IS THAT VOLODIN UNDERSTOOD POSTPONEMENT OF HIS PROJECT WAS PART OF GENERAL ACTION BY GOSPLAN DIRECTLY TIED TO GRAIN SITUATION. SLOWDOWN IN PURCHASE OF HEAVY CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT, WHICH SOVIETS DEFINITELY REGARD AS "ESSENTIAL ITEM," IS PERHAPS MORE SIGNIFICANT, AND IT WILL BE INTERESTING TO SEE WHETHER TRAKTOROEXPORT SWINGS BACK INTO ACTION IN OCTOBER, AS PREDICTED. UPCOMING VISIT BY FIAT-ALLIS OFFICIALS, WHO HAVE ITEM WHICH SOVIETS REGARD VERY HIGHLY (I.E. 525 HP CRAWLER TRACTOR) MAY PROVIDE SOME CLUES ON THIS POINT.
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